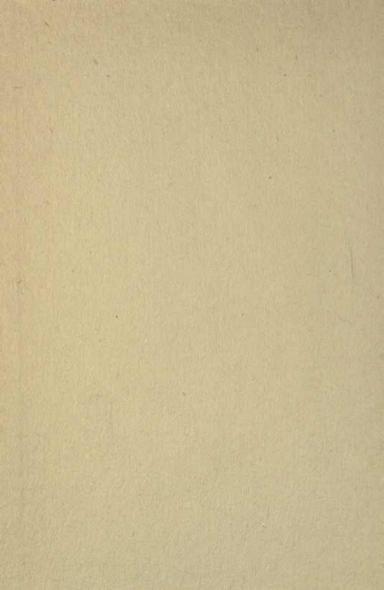
BEATITUDES OF JESUS

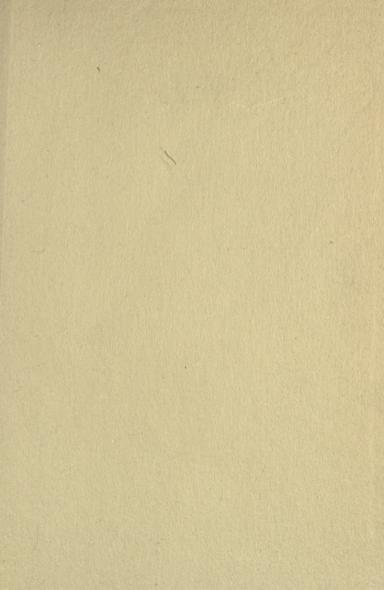
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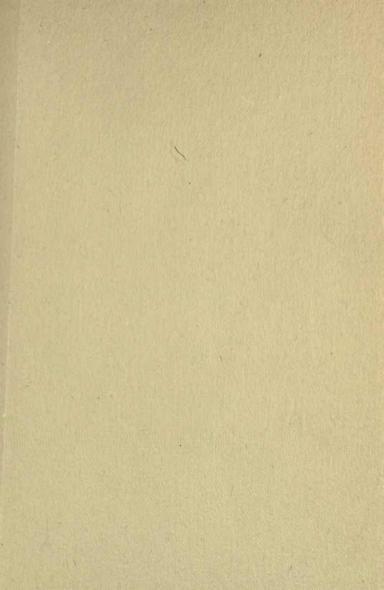






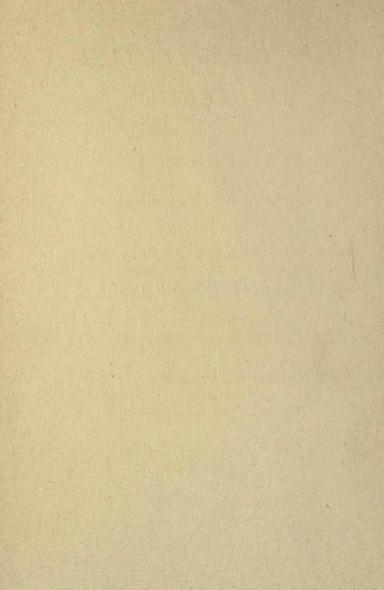








THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS.



THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS

Vesper Addresses
on
The Octave of Blessedness

Given in Trinity Church, San Jose, Cal., and at the Church Divinity School, San Mateo,

J. WILMER GRESHAM, B.D.

WITH INTRODUCTORY WORDS

BY THE

THE BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA

SAN JOSE, CAL.
MELVIN & MURGOTTEN, Inc.
1908



TO THE

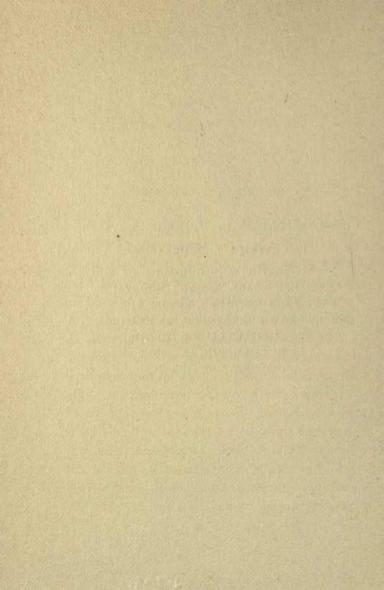
REV. WILLIAM P. DUBOSE, S.T.D.

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF THE INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE OF THOSE CHERISHED YEARS "ON THE MOUNTAIN"

AT SEWANEE, WHEN, BEFORE THE WORLD KNEW HIM THROUGH HIS WRITINGS, "HIS DISCIPLES CAME UNTO HIM,"

AND KNEW HIM AS THEIR TEACHER AND FRIEND.



INTRODUCTORY WORDS

BY THE

Bishop of California.

When, Sunday after Sunday, people flock to a Vesper Service at an hour in the late afternoon generally supposed to be least hopeful for large congregations, there is some reason for it. The many must have caught some message.

The following addresses on The Beatitudes of Jesus, which were delivered at Trinity Church, San José, had that evidence of their message. They were spoken without manuscript to those who heard them. Happily, in order that others may read the same message, the addresses have been written out and printed here. The sustained interest of the congregations proves the perennial vitality of "preaching Jesus." This showing one reason why people go to Church is

Introductory Words.

far more effective than any number of reasons why they do not go to Church.

"The Octave of Blessedness" is the felicitous phrase chosen in the sub-title to note the fact that the eight "Beatitudes are both mutually related and individually distinct," and that this "constitutes at once their inspiration and their charm." And the range of interpretation in the chording of the Beatitudes to profound human need and aspiration reveals music which breathes of the harmonies of spiritual counterpoint. Benedictus benedicat.

WILLIAM F. NICHOLS.

The Bishop's House, San Francisco, St. Luke's Day, 1908.

THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS.

St. Matthew: Fifth Chapter.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

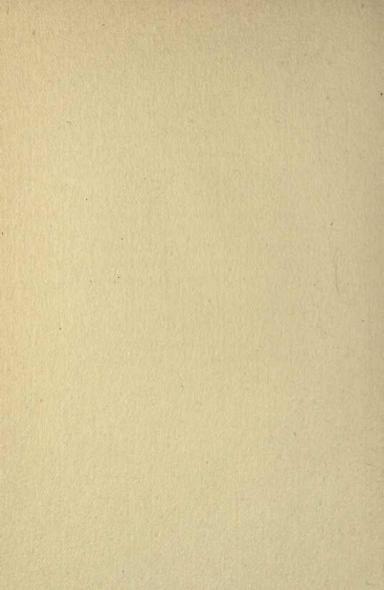
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

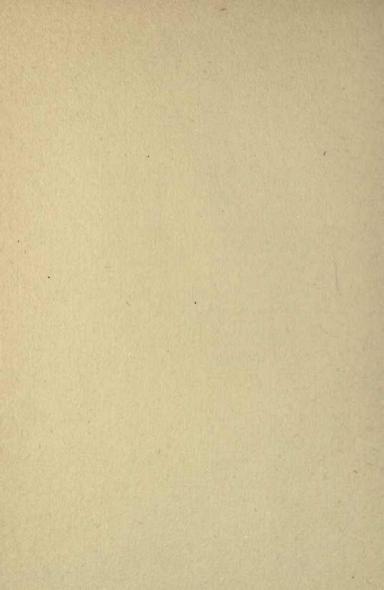
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



At first the music of the Beatitudes tells out its sweetness in the simplicity of familiar melody, but as the ear of man's spiritual nature comes to catch its deep undertones and to trace its hidden harmonies, the nature of its simplicity is heightened and deepened, its simple unison rises into majestic harmony, and this harmony is simplicity brought to its perfect state. In a word, the simplicity of the Beatitudes is the simplicity of the character of Christ.



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OF THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS.

T.

OF THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

ONE God, one law, one element," wrote Tennyson, in words of insight only a shade less familiar to the popular mind than the words of vision with which the noble passage closes, "and one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." With deeper insight and diviner vision, in the chaste forms of the simplest speech, or veiled under luminous parable, the Man of Nazareth spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God. This expression came to signify to him, with ever-increasing completeness, that conception of the divine order which it was his mission to reveal to human consciousness, and ultimately to fulfill in human history. The

"Kingdom of Heaven" is the first concrete expression that falls from his lips as he stands on the threshold of his ministry, and it is the substance of his final teaching during the great forty days that stretch in the after-glow of his resurrection. He seems to have lengthened his stay upon earth in order to unfold its deeper meanings in the light of his accomplished work. Thus we find it set forth in the initial beatitude as the spiritual blessedness that awaits the poor in spirit, and it greets us in the closing beatitude as the reward of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The keynote, touched in the opening chord, is heard again with added richness of meaning in the closing strain, while each of the related intermediate harmonies may be traced by the spiritual ear.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

This thought, the Kingdom of Heaven, which underlies the structure of the beatitudes, is woven into the texture of the

Master's life, and forms the substance of his best authenticated teaching. It shadows forth with marvelous clearness of delineation his conception of his mission to earth, and expresses his deepest conviction of the ultimate relation of God to man and the universe. In attempting an analysis of the first beatitude, we shall find our reflections materially assisted by viewing the natural divisions of our simple text in their reverse order. Let us ask ourselves, first, what this expression, "the Kingdom of Heaven," meant to the Master, and what he intends it should mean to us. Then let us inquire who are the poor in spirit, and in what sense the Kingdom is theirs. What, then, are we to understand by the phrase, the Kingdom of Heaven, as it takes its place in the earliest teaching of Jesus? Many learned volumes have been written in reply to this question. It is easy enough to be dogmatic, and to dismiss the inquiry by framing a reply in the rigid terms of a cold traditionalism.

The seeker of mere novelty of expression, on the other hand, often as dogmatic as the theological traditionalist himself, is justly reminded that the new may not be true, and the true may not be new. Yet for our comfort, we may reflect that every sincere attempt to conceive and express the truth may be in some real, though relative sense, both new and true.

THE UNFOLDING OF THE KINGDOM.

There can be little doubt that the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven in the heart and mind of Jesus passed through successive stages of unfolding, and was in fact as organic in its nature as the Kingdom itself. We cannot trace these stages with any degree of certainty, but we can offer reverent, and, perhaps, reasonable conjecture. The average mind is strangely averse to admission of the progressive development of the mental conceptions of Jesus. If the admission is made, as the records require, it is made with reservations that virtually inval-

idate it. But waiving all discussion of the subject, let us reflect upon the unfolding of the Kingdom in the consciousness of Jesus. There were two central thoughts that lay at the heart of his teachings, and to which all that he said and did stood related. They were the thought of God in his relation to man, and the thought of man is his relation to God. During the thirty years of his retirement from the world, when, amid the familiar scenes of his Nazareth home, Jesus waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, with the grace of God ever upon him, these thoughts matured with his expanding intelligence, shedding light upon the problems of faith and the guestions of duty, for we read that he grew in favour with "God and man." The one recorded incident of his boyhood points to this two-fold direction of his development, where we find the balance between his Godward and manward relations carefully maintained. Surely, it must have been from sources such as these

that his earliest conception of the Kingdom took shape; and while the dream of a Messianic mission must have tinged his thought, the spiritual principle that animated his mind would ultimately free that conception from every restrictive influence. When we next see him he is standing at the entrance of his ministry with the words, "Thou art my beloved Son," falling like a benediction on his soul, and the Baptist's cry, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," ringing in his ears. Yet he is keenly aware of the temper of the expectancy that greets him in the waning light of the Baptist's ministry. It is Messianic; and it is borne in upon him that his Kingdom must transcend his own boyhood's dreams and Israel's expectations. The next stage is that of the temptation. No thoughtful student of the temptation narratives can fail to note their bearing upon the Messianic question, or to trace the influence of that inward struggle upon the great central truths that lay at the heart of the

human development of Jesus. Perhaps the radiant vision of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them never entirely faded from his soul, but the Kingdom of Heaven henceforth meant for him, God's presence and God's rule realized in human consciousness; and when he crowns his first Beatitude with the phrase "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," he is speaking from a region of spiritual elevation whose condition he has tested, whose laws he has mastered, and into whose blessedness he would lead mankind.

Before passing on to define the meaning of the phrase "the poor in spirit," we have but to notice that this Beatitude places the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven in the present tense. This tense is not repeated until the eighth Beatitude is reached, when the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned as the reward of the persecuted. Manifestly the impression intended to be conveyed is that the Kingdom is in some deep sense "at hand" as a

possible fact of experience, a divine event, whose consummation awaits the fulfillment of its clearly stated law.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." We can best arrive at an understanding of the condition imposed, by excluding the false explanations that meet us at the outset. From the rendering of the Beatitude in the twentieth verse of the sixth chapter of St. Luke, "Blessed be ye poor," it is evident that the poverty mentioned in the third Gospel is intended to imply a condition of material circumstance, and this is supported by the antithesis in the twenty-fourth verse, where the evangelist represents Christ as saying: "But woe unto you that are rich." In interpreting the Beatitude, we might dismiss from our minds this aspect of poverty, but for its evident bearing upon a closely related condition. It seems quite clear that we have in the two

accounts, reports of the Master's teaching on two distinct occasions, and under widely differing circumstances. At the same time it must be admitted that Christ, both in his teaching and by his example, exalts the condition of material poverty as conducive to spiritual advantage. But never does he exalt it for its own sake as inherently meritorious. In all his references to the subject, he seems to lay down the principle that discipleship involves a certain detachment which is equally indifferent to wealth or poverty; that a man's best life "consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Material poverty is to be understood as blessed only as it ministers to the spirit of detachment. On the other hand, one's wealth and material advantage may be administered in the spirit of a stewardship that will make effectively for precisely the same temper of detachment. Vet because the characteristic tendency of material affluence is in the opposite direction, we can understand

that the Master would say as the rich young ruler passed out of his sight, "how hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," and to those who, while deprived of this world's good things, were rich towards God, "Blessed be ye poor."

POVERTY AND THE KINGDOM.

We must bear in mind, however, that St. Matthew's designation "poor in spirit" releases us from the necessity of defending the blessedness that belongs to a condition of material privation, and limits our discussion to a state or condition within the spirit of man. The region of man's spiritual nature is clearly the region designated. But what is meant by man's spiritual nature? Surely poverty of spirit means neither a false humility regarding one's endowments or acquisitions of mind, nor an unreal depreciation of one's native or acquired qualities of character. Whatever our spiritual pastors and masters may have taught us in time past, we are

neither to regard our thoughts as altogether vain, nor our righteousnesses as filthy rags, nor ourselves as vile earth and miserable sinners.

What then are we to understand as the poverty of spirit named in the Beatitude? Clearly it is an attitude of the soul. In general terms it is a recognition that man is incomplete apart from God. As regards its personal meaning to the individual, there are two elements that enter into it, and give it definiteness. First, it must be conscious poverty. That which makes poverty poverty is one's keen consciousness of it. All men need God, few men are deeply conscious of that need. The other element is that it is an unsatisfied poverty. The oft-quoted phrase of St. Augustine, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart will find no rest till it rests in thee," expresses this most perfectly. This sense of unsatisfied incompleteness passes into spiritual yearning and receptiveness, which is but another name for poverty of spirit.

In what sense can it be said of those who meet these terms that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven? In a sense not unlike that in which we may speak of the Kingdom of Knowledge as the possession of the mind that, being uninformed and ignorant, is both sorrowfully aware of the limitation, and resolutely bent on overcoming it. To be ignorant, to be conscious of ignorance, and to be dissatisfied with ignorance, means mental effort, and this, persisted in, means mental acquisition, or entrance into the Kingdom of Knowledge. Poverty of spirit likewise opens wide its doors to the Kingdom of Heaven, and a spiritual process is begun, whose completion will not be reached till man's spirit is filled with all the fulness of God.

THE CONTENT OF BLESSEDNESS.

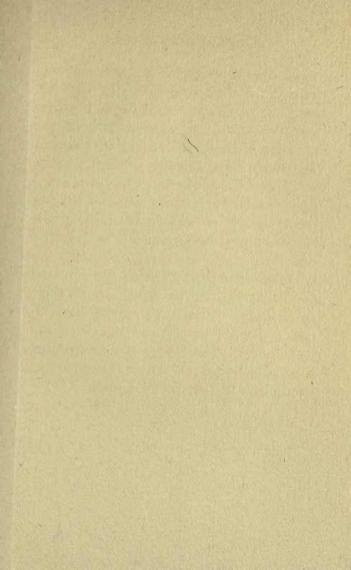
It remains for us to define or suggest the meaning that lies behind this keyword of the Beatitudes, which more than any other single expression of the Master represents his conception of the *summum*

Of the Poor in Spirit.

bonum of his spiritual kingdom. There is a sense in which the very nature of this blessedness precludes definition, inasmuch as it is the spiritual state of those who have met the several conditions named in the Beatitudes. There is a subtle danger in attempting to reason by analogy from the lower to the higher, as when in our interpretation we construe blessedness as a kind of heightened or glorified happiness. But when the Beatitudes are regarded as a self-revelation of Christ it becomes evident that he himself must have been in possession of the blessedness which he promises as a result of the fulfillment of the conditions set forth in the Beatitudes, and our hope of arriving at an understanding of the nature of that blessedness turns upon the degree of our insight into the spiritual state in which Christ lived and had his being. Our task is greatly lightened as we watch the movement of his life through successive periods of its unfolding, and then pause to contemplate the disclosures that marked the

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concluding days of his ministry. When, for example, he speaks of his joy, his love, and his peace, as inherent in his own spiritual state, we cannot fathom the meaning of these elemental qualities, but we can conceive them as belonging to the content of his blessedness, and it is infinitely reassuring, to those who are seeking the Kingdom of God by the path of the Beatitudes, to find that in the Master's use of each of these terms, he claims for his followers a share of whatever spiritual condition they imply, which is equivalent to bidding his disciples share his blessedness. The law or principle of this participation we find set forth in the Beatitudes, from obedience to which there is no exemption for Master or disciple.





OF THOSE THAT MOURN.

"Blessed are they that Mourn: for they shall be Comforted."

II.

OF THOSE THAT MOURN.

NOWHERE, in all the range of Christ's teaching, can we find his character more completely mirrored than in the Beatitudes. In portraying the beauty and the blessedness of the Perfect Life, the Master has unconsciously given to the world a description of himself, so that with entire truthfulness it may be said that henceforth the Perfect Life and the Christ Life are terms of equal meaning. On this account both the character and the words of Jesus are invested with an added beauty and significance. It is quite conceivable that the Perfect Life might have been lived without its lofty principles being crystallized in human speech. On the other hand, the Master, dwelling in the light which no man can

approach unto, might have tempered his disclosure of spiritual truth with reference to human limitations, as when he later declared, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." In either case the connection between the life and the teaching would have been remote and unreal, and we should find ourselves groping dimly in the twilight of conjecture, with no clear light upon the path of precept or example. As the case stands, the Beatitudes become luminous with meaning, for the Master's words interpret and reveal his life, and his life in turn clothes his words with infinite beauty and preciousness.

TWO RELATED TRUTHS.

Our first impression of the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," is that while it speaks directly from the heart of the Master to the world's deepest need, it bears no necessary relation to the inner history of Jesus, except in the sense that

he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Such an impression is the result of our religious training and traditions, which dispose us to substitute the theological Christ, or the ecclesiastical Christ, for the human Christ. We hesitate to construct the inner spiritual history of the Master in terms of human experience, and thus we miss much of the meaning, and of the comfort, too, of passages such as the one before us, where the blessing of comfort is pronounced upon those that mourn. In this Beatitude, we have a bit of the inner history of Jesus, the full meaning of which cannot be appreciated without reference to the one that precedes it, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." It seems strange that more than one careful student of the Beatitudes should fail to note the connection here, contending for an arrangement differing from that given by St. Matthew, and insisting that the Beatitude of the Meek should follow that of the Poor in Spirit.

The surface resemblance in the latter case has much apparently to commend it, but when we understand the theme of the Beatitudes to be the Kingdom of Heaven, the connection between the poor in spirit and those that mourn becomes quite close and vital, and we are led to conclude that the order given is the true one, and that St. Matthew has correctly reported the original utterance of our Lord.

THE MISSION OF COMFORT.

It may be remembered that in our previous address, we took the ground that when Christ said "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," poverty of spirit was understood to be a condition of inward receptiveness, which of its very nature invites the beginning of a spiritual process known as the Kingdom of Heaven. There seems a slight confusion of thought in speaking of the Kingdom as a process, yet such it unquestionably is. It is both a spiritual state, and a spiritual process. A spiritual

state, in that it is the invited presence and acknowledged rule of God; a spiritual process, in that not until every power and faculty in the vast region of man's inner consciousness is brought into subjection to that rule will the Kingdom be realized in experience. Incident to this process of the unfolding of the Kingdom, or rule and presence of God in man's spirit, there is pain and anguish, sorrow and travail, yet, be the process as mournful as it will, there is divinest comfort in the vision of the ultimate end to be achieved, for experience worketh hope, and hope sees dimly a glory that shall be revealed when the "becoming is completed" and God is all in all. There is comfort, too, in the reflection that the Master knew no exemption from the law that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and we have the assurance that we may know the fellowship of his sufferings. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points

tempted like as we are." As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews further recounts the history of Christ's preparation for the bestowal of sympathy, how intimately do we find the Master's poverty of spirit related to the pain that attended the process of his spiritual unfolding, as when we read that "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him, and was heard in that he feared," and that "though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." It is quite true that we are now reading these passages back into the Beatitude, yet if the Beatitude in setting forth the law of the spiritual life faithfully reflects the mind and interprets the experience of Jesus, the connection between the blessedness of the poor in spirit and the blessedness of those that mourn is unmistakable. The tender minor into which the music of the Beatitudes sinks, vi-

brates to universal human need, because it is a chord in the spiritual consciousness of him who offers his own blessedness to the world. Coleridge declared that he knew the Bible to be inspired because it found him. How truly does it find us here! "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!" In the midst of pain inscrutable and grief insupportable, under the crush of sorrow, and in the shadow of death, the consolations of God are voiced from human lips, and there is "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARABLES.

Assuming that there is a connection, indeed, an intimate relation, between the blessedness of those that mourn, and that poverty of spirit in answer to which the Kingdom of Heaven is given, we shall find in several of the parables of the Kingdom the place of comfort in the unfolding of the spiritual life from within. Later

we shall speak in more general terms of the mission of comfort in the disciplines of life. In that cluster of parables which St. Matthew introduces into his later narrative, the Kingdom of Heaven is set forth under a variety of images, which may be interpreted either objectively of the Church, or subjectively of the soul in its relation to God. It is in the latter sense that we shall view them, that is, as descriptive of the spiritual process to which reference has been made. The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price picturesquely portray the intrinsic worth of the Kingdom, and at the same time imply the possibility of its present possession. The Mustard Seed, the Leaven, and the Growing Wheat, are descriptive of a process insignificant in its beginning, gradual in its operation, and for a long time doubtful as to its final issue. When the poor in spirit, aglow with the thought that the Kingdom of Heaven is indeed theirs, awake to the realization that this Kingdom in its inception is

meagre to the point of insignificance, that, in fact, it is as a grain of mustard seed, the reflection is mournful and depressing. The enthusiasm that accompanies the purchase of the field wherein the treasure lies buried, or the first possession of the priceless pearl, is followed by depression, as the first two pictures melt away and give place to the tiny image of insignificance. But the mustard seed is only apparently insignificant. It tells of life. When the Master declares that faith as a grain of mustard seed may remove mountains, obviously he is speaking of vital, not meagre faith; and the soul mourning over the smallness of the beginnings of God's work within takes comfort in the thought that this work, in obedience to its own inherent law, must go on till the vitalizing process is complete. "By and by it waxeth a great tree, and the fowls of the air take refuge under the shadow of it." The parable of the Leaven deals with another phase of the development of the Kingdom from within. A

transmuting principle is introduced into the unleavened lump of human character. Our attention is now fixed upon the slowness, and, so to speak, the painfulness of a process by which human nature submits to this transmuting influence working silently, and from within. But if the process be slow and painful, it is none the less persistent and effectual. Again we find that patience worketh experience, and experience hope, for ultimately the silent spiritual forces that lie concealed in human character will complete their transforming work. The whole lump, whether of human character or of the social order, will one day be leavened, and surely there is infinite comfort in such an assurance.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT.

The parable of the Growing Wheat introduces an element which for a time seems to make the final issue doubtful. It tells of the sinister design of an enemy, who, under cover of night, maliciously

sows tares among the wheat. This aggressive and personal aspect of moral evil, in the presence of which human nature feels its mournful helplessness, is a graphic picture of the Kingdom within which all of us instinctively recognize. "Surely," we exclaim with the husbandman in his dismay, "an enemy hath done this!"

Universal experience testifies to the havoc that some power not ourselves has wrought in even the best of us. There is comfort for those that mourn in such a case. Patience must have her perfect work. The parable tells of the ultimate destruction of the evil, the final triumph of good. These parables are descriptive of the process of the Kingdom as it unfolds from within, yet they set forth but single phases of that process. Again, the Beatitude of Comfort is not indifferent to the needs of the spiritual life as it proceeds from above and without. In the conversation with Nicodemus, the mysteriousness of the process of birth into the Kingdom is set forth significantly: "the

wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth," so is the spiritual process. But in his farewell discourse another aspect is dwelt upon, the painfulness of the process issuing in a heightened happiness. woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come, but when she is delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world." Christ's use of this figure, in close connection with his plain words concerning his departure and return, implies his own intimate relation to the new birth. The blessedness of comfort could not be stated more strongly or more beautifully.

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW.

Our study of this Beatitude would be incomplete if we confined our application of it to the growth of the soul in its relation to the Kingdom, apart from the circumstances of human experience that

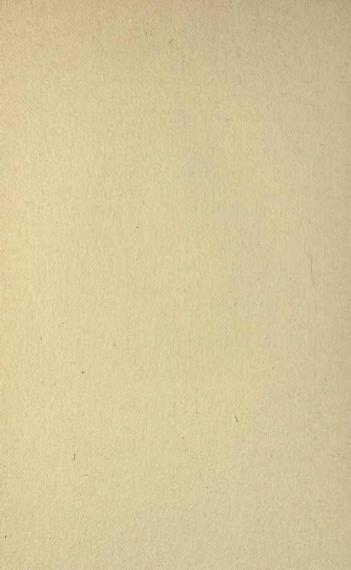
fashion it both from without and from within. The high priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities has opened an unfailing source of sympathy for the tempted and tried, for the sin-burdened and the grief-stricken, for the afflicted and distressed in mind, body and estate—sympathy for those that sorrow, comfort for those that mourn. But the sympathy and the comfort that meet us at every stage of human vicissitude find their meaning in the higher levels of spiritual vision to which they lead. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

The student of the inner life of Jesus doubtless feels an instinctive reluctance

in ascribing to the content of his Master's blessedness the spiritual equivalent of the emotion of sorrow named in the Beatitude, fearing lest it imply a penitence inconsistent with the cherished tradition of his sinlessness. Nevertheless, the comfort that falls to the lot of those that mourn must have been his in a sense not figurative but real, as the Kingdom of God's presence and rule, under the stress and pressure of temptation, advanced from stage to stage of its inward realization. That thus, indeed, he was qualified for his high-priestly function of sympathy, is clearly shown in the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which we have just read. "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need." The bestowal of com-

fort has become in a most intimate and peculiar sense the mission of the Incarnate Son, who, at all points, has related himself to human need. "Who in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his godly fear." Himself once a recipient of comfort, he is now divinely qualified for the bestowal of sympathy; to disclose the meaning of suffering and the ministry of pain; to reveal to those of the sons of earth who travail and are heavy-laden the truth of the human heart of God.



OF THE MEEK.

"Blessed are the Meek: for they shall inherit the Earth."

III,

OF THE MEEK.

THE order in which the Beatitudes are reported by St. Matth are reported by St. Matthew is not arbitrary or accidental. On the contrary, there is evidence of the presence of a spiritual sequence which is both profoundly suggestive in itself, and, at the same time, indicative of an intimate knowledge of the law that governs the unfolding of the inner life. We have already traced the connection between the blessedness of the poor in spirit and the blessedness pronounced upon those that mourn. It will be seen that from these the Beatitude of the Meek follows as a natural corollary, the steps of transition being clear and unmistakable. If poverty of spirit implies an unsatisfied spiritual receptiveness, and grief and pain are incident to

the quest for God, then something akin to meekness must ensue when the soul is ushered into the presence of God. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit." There can be no better way in which to prepare our minds for a spiritual appreciation of the Beatitude of the Meek than by tracing more closely this intimate relation, which will greatly influence the conclusions we shall finally reach regarding the nature of meekness and the meaning of its temporal reward.

THE SOUL'S PILGRIMAGE.

When, amid the material satisfactions of life, man is conscious of unutterable loneliness, and discovers that the inward peace which he craves can be realized only in the companionship of God, it may be that his spirit sets out on the definite quest for God, and, unless his experience is quite exceptional, his feet follow one or another.

Of the Meek.

of several well-trodden paths. It may be the path of penitence, which leads through the land where the famine is, when, having spent all in the world's service, he calmly turns his back upon the old life, and sets out for his Father's home. It may be the path of a nameless sorrow, when the burden of an affliction which is not light or momentary presses with a weight of increasing bitterness upon the heart, often a mere foot-path leading down into the valley where the shadows lie, scarce visible in the gathering gloom. Or, perchance, it is the slow and painful ascent of some dimly discerned duty involving sacrifice, wherein the soul must rise on stepping stones of its dead self to higher things. Be the conditions of its pilgrimage what they may, it will be seen that when the path of the spiritual life emerges into God's clear light, and the soul awakens to a vision of the lofty One, man's spirit clothes itself with meekness as with a garment, for meekness is the soul's attitude towards Him who

hath blessed its poverty with his riches, comforted its mourning with his love, and now rewards its lowliness with his abiding presence. We shall presently return to the line of interpretation suggested by the interdependence of these opening Beatitudes.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BEATITUDE

We may now profitably interrupt our analysis to reflect briefly upon the Beatitude of the Meek in its relation to originality. An ordinary reference Bible reminds the most casual reader that the third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," is, with the slightest possible variation, a direct quotation from the Old Testament, where we read in the thirty-seventh Psalm, "for the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Moreover, to a greater or less degree it would be possible to parallel the other Beatitudes from Hebrew literature, and the same course might be followed with

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approximate results with reference to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and very much else in what we have been taught to regard as Christ's most distinctive teaching; indeed, a study of non-Christian sources has also been found fruitful in the establishment of such parallelisms. In view of this, it is well to keep in mind the precise nature of Christ's originality, and to remember the distinction between the relative and the absolute in his disclosure of truth. Much of Christ's teaching was relative as regards its material, absolute as regards the employment of that material. There is no title more truly descriptive of him in relation to the truth he taught than the title "The Master." The separate notes in the Divine Octave had been struck repeatedly in the course of the ages; never before had they been woven into a single harmony. When the last word concerning the parallelisms has been spoken, the fact remains that the Master formulated the Beatitudes, grouped them in their remarkable

sequence, and crowned them with that spiritual distinctiveness which gives them their essential character.

THE QUALITY OF MEEKNESS.

In interpreting the principle of our present Beatitude, and attempting to unfold its deeper meanings, let us first inquire the precise quality of meekness; then examine scriptural instances of it; and finally seek to understand the sense in which it may be said of those who acquire it that they shall possess the earth. The precise nature of meekness is greatly confused in the popular mind by reason of familiar misrepresentations of it. The common impression of meekness is that it is but another name for weakness. This view seems to find a certain support in such passages as the following from the Sermon on the Mount: "I say unto you that ye resist not him that is evil, but whoso smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also. And if any man go to law with thee, and

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take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him one mile, go with him twain." This, as we know, was the Master's comment on the law of retaliation, and it seems to give color to that misconception of meekness with which we take issue. The truth is, however, that this passage has no reference to the quality of meekness, but is illustrative of the substitution of the law of love for the law of retaliation, and sets forth the lengths to which love should go in its mission of service. It implies spiritual strength and greatness, not insipidity and weakness, and may be understood as a working principle by reference to the life of Christ, of which love was the supreme motive. It is small wonder that meekness so interpreted should lend itself to caricature and travesty. Happily, the religion of the Man of Nazareth is reverting to its earlier type, and the unreal and effeminate features which have so long concealed its vigor and its strength, and have done so

much to dishonor and discredit it, are rapidly undergoing transformation, and giving place to an image that will one day be lifted up and draw all men unto it. "Meekness," wrote Archbishop Trench, "is not in man's outward behavior only, nor yet in his relation to his fellowman. Rather it is an inwrought grace of the soul, and its exercises are first and chiefly towards God." This admirable definition of meekness will be found to harmonize absolutely with the scriptural view of it, which consistently makes the sphere of its action man's Godward rather than his manward relations. The soul, brought face to face with God, becomes lowly in its own clear sight. It no longer measures itself by itself, nor yet by the standard of other men. In the readjustment of its relations with the world its bearing may become full of tenderness and pity and gentle consideration, but these qualities will be the expression of a truer estimate of human values, a juster sense of the meaning of life and its relationships.

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"Then thought I to understand this: but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I the end of these men."

EXAMPLES OF MEEKNESS.

With these thoughts in mind we turn to the examples of the meekness thus defined which meet us in the great textbook of spiritual biography, the Bible. We have been taught to regard the founder of the Hebrew nation as the supreme embodiment of meekness, and doubtless we have often wondered wherein he actually exemplified it, for every incident of his life reveals his character in quite the opposite light. The fault, of course, lies with us, for we have brought to the case that preconception of meekness which views it as a trait of disposition having its characteristic action in a manward direction. The Hebrew patriot who proudly disdains the royal ancestry that would claim him; who with soul aflame hurls an offending Egyptian to his death,

escaping the consequence of his act by flight, only to return to effect the liberation of his people by a prowess born of the conviction of a heaven-given mission, is no type of maudlin meekness. Whether we view him as prophet or chieftain, leader or lawgiver, the history of the Exodus, which is but his own story, written large, abounds in the material of a personality singularly devoid of the elements of traditional meekness. But when this remarkable man is viewed in the light of his relations with the Unseen, as the servant or Minister of God, the difficulties are all cleared away, and we can readily understand that the verdict of spiritual history is true. This qualityone had almost said this faculty—so exemplified in the Hebrew prophet, finds its most perfect expression in the Man of Nazareth. This is significantly shown at nearly every turn as the Perfect Life unfolds, but perhaps nowhere more expressly than in that passage in St. Matthew, where our Lord describes himself

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as meek and lowly in heart, the immediate occasion of which was his denunciation of the cities that had witnessed his most mighty works, and yet coldly rejected his claims. At the very moment when he thanks his Divine Father that the truth is hidden from the wise and prudent and made known unto babes, he essays to offer himself to the sorrow-burdened world as the source of rest and peace, "because he is meek and lowly in heart." If time permitted, the principle stated might be abundantly illustrated from the gospel records, but we must now pass to the final division of our subject.

THE HERITAGE OF THE EARTH.

It remains for us briefly to define the sense in which the meekness thus described may be said to realize the temporal promise of the Beatitude. "The meek shall inherit the earth." The blessedness of the meek turns unmistakably upon the adjustment of an earthward relationship, notwithstanding that the

principle of that adjustment is essentially spiritual. This Beatitude of the Meek is more truly Messianic in character than any of its companion Beatitudes, and doubtless it spoke to the heart of those who heard it in terms more definite, and with a meaning more intelligible, than did any of the others in the octave. The inheritance of the land had been the goal of their hopes, and now the wider vision of the possession of the earth made its subtle appeal to every instinct of their national character.

It may be said, first, that the Beatitude is remotely true. The future tense is used. The principle of a spiritual evolution by its selective processes is making steadily for the production of a spiritual type which will ultimately possess the earth—a type that will delight itself in the abundance of peace in that far-off time when men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and conflict shall be no more. If meekness, as defined, is a condition of

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the divine indwelling, the Beatitude may be understood as prophetic of that time. But such an interpretation of the temporal promise is open to the criticism that it is as unreal as it is remote, and in this light it would have been meaningless to those to whom it was first given, as it is relatively meaningless to us. Meekness, again, may be understood as a temper of mind that enables its possessor to enter into nature's processes, and master her secrets, for the abnegation of self, in the spirit of lowliness and patience, conditions every search for truth, as when the gifted Newton confessed himself but a child, gathering shells upon the seashore, while the great ocean of truth spread out in mystery before him. Then, again, we may find an explanation of the promise in the meaning that turns upon the term "possession." Possession, properly understood, is not a thing of title-deeds or landmarks, which impose limitations. Nothing can be more foreign to the disposition of the truly meek than the anx-

ieties that attach to ownership. Possession is one thing, property another. A lovely picture may be the possession of the soul to whom its beauty is revealed, a book the possession of the mind that has mastered its meaning, while in each case ownership may lie in another direction. An individual, burdened with a heritage of golden wealth and leaden instincts, once invited a poet to saunter with him through his vast domains. "The land is mine," affirmed the rich man, complacently. "Truly, but the landscape is mine," replied the poet. This is the key to the interpretation of the Apostle's paradox, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Says a thoughtful writer: "in the language of the world the expression 'it is mine' means this thing belongs to me, and to none else; in the language of truth, 'it is mine' means 'I draw from this thing the good it is capable of imparting." He continues: "the force, the power, the knowledge, the virtue of things, cannot be said to belong to

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him who has rights over them which he has never exercised. They belong to him who derives benefit from them. They belong not so much to him who owns them, as to him who has made them his own." Similarly, the heritage of the earth by the meek-spirited may be understood as ultimately in the nature of a spiritual acquisition. It is for a time veiled in material symbolism, and made attractive by the subtle power of illusion, as an expression of the principle, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."



OF THE QUEST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled."

IV.

OF THE QUEST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THAT the Beatitudes are both mutually related and individually distinct constitutes at once their inspiration and their charm. We have already found that there runs through them the thread of a remarkable spiritual sequence, while at the same time we have seen that a careful study of the inner content of each separate Beatitude discloses a fresh principle, and marks a new stage in the soul's advance on the path of the perfect life. The dramatic arrangement of the music of the Beatitudes, which otherwise might be forgotten, so natural are the transitions, is enforced in the present instance by a change of key, which the spiritual ear immediately detects, and which harmonizes perfectly with the opening

chords. In other words, the first three Beatitudes, which are more intimately related in thought than are any of the others, are descriptive of the soul in its more passive moods, while the change of key which distinguishes the fourth Beatitude, indicates an active and energetic disposition of man's spiritual nature, whose intensity and positiveness can be expressed adequately only in the language of hunger and thirst.

THE COMPARISON AND CONTRAST.

When the psalmist cries out, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God: my soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God, when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" he interprets the quality of the first Beatitude, where a blessing is pronounced upon the poor in spirit, for the thirst is for God rather than for God's righteousness—in fact the cry is but a vague yearning for the satisfaction of an intellectual or spiritual craving, with

no moral quality whatsoever. The next stage is reached when the moral element is introduced; when the sense of guilt, which hides the face of God, is consoled with the blessedness of those that mourn. The third stage follows when penitence has done its work in the soul, and the high and lofty One takes His abode with him who is of an humble and contrite spirit. But as neither soul poverty, nor soul sorrow, nor the lowliest meekness, may claim affinity with God on moral grounds, being merely passive states incident to the soul's contemplation of God, the fourth Beatitude depicts the next act in the unfolding drama of man's inner life, substitutes an active disposition for a passive state, and henceforth the quest for God becomes an immortal hunger and thirst for God's righteousness

THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE ELEMENTS.

Nowhere in Holy Scripture may we find the active and passive elements of

man's spiritual experience portrayed with greater vividness or placed in stronger contrast than in the familiar history of the patriarch Jacob. His dream at Bethel grew out of loneliness or spiritual poverty, while the radiant ladder reaching to the skies, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, symbolized God's answer to the yearning for communion. The lonely Jacob's waking reflection, "how terrible is this place, this is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven," illustrates the third element in the passive state; that of lowly humbleness of heart. These passive impressions had no special moral quality, yet they deepened the consciousness of God, and brought peace, and the spirit of trust and submission. More than twenty years later the moral crisis came, when returning from his lengthened exile the supplanter wrestled with an unseen antagonist beside the murmuring Jabbok until the daybreak. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," was the

language of a spiritual craving which no radiant dream of peace or vision of reconciliation could appease, "Tell me thy name" was equivalent to "Show me thy right-eousness." The closing touch in the story, "And he blessed him there," reminds us that then, as now, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will not be sent empty away.

THE DEFINITENESS OF THE BEATITUDE.

Besides revealing an active disposition of the soul, the Beatitude is significant on account of its definiteness. No atmosphere of vague mysticism surrounds and obscures it. The blessing is not pronounced upon the instinctive yearning for God, but upon those who are in quest of righteousness. Elsewhere when the Kingdom of God is set forth as the goal of man's seeking, the Master adds, "and His righteousness," lest the term should be misleading. This, together with the fact that the Sermon on the Mount is an extended commentary upon the essential

meaning of righteousness, clothes the central thought of the Beatitude with a definiteness which makes it clearly intelligible. In the Sermon on the Mount both tables of the ancient law are reviewed with reference to a spiritual exposition of righteousness, wherein righteousness is shown to consist of right relations toward God and towards man, and the motive of the fulfilling of this righteousness is "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to yearn to realize that which God in His inmost being is, which is ultimately discovered to be love. But love, again, is rescued from vagueness by being expressed in terms of righteousness, as it is exemplified in acts of obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." God is not only mercy, pity, and tenderness, but equally justice, goodness, and truth; in a word, He is essential righteousness. And there has never yet been a time in the spiritual history of men when it has

not been imperative to insist that a true quest for God is equally a quest for right-eousness.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE BEATITUDE.

With these thoughts in mind, let us turn to the principle of the Beatitude, asking ourselves first the meaning of hunger and thirst in the economy of the spiritual life; next, the sense in which provision is made for the satisfaction of man's craving for righteousness; and finally, the application of the principle to our own spiritual needs. In answer to our first question, touching the function of hunger and thirst in the economy of the spiritual life, we turn naturally to the analogy of the physical life for illustration. There we find the instinct of hunger and thirst to be part of nature's provision for the preservation of life. Life consists not only in correspondence with environment, but in the ability of the organism to nourish and sustain itself from its environment, virtually to turn

the stones into bread to maintain life. Lest this basic principle be lost sight of, nature affixes her penalties of pain and suffering and death. The pangs of hunger and thirst are indicative both of physical health and of man's dependence upon the external order, and these instincts are universal in their sway. Now, the world of nature is but a type and symbol of the world of spirit, and there are instincts of man's spiritual nature as absolutely dependent upon an external order as are hunger and thirst in the physical realm. The instinct for God, the thirst for immortality, are part of the constitution of man's spiritual nature, to which the history of religion bears witness, and the thirst for goodness is as age-old and universal as the thirst for immortality or for God. All this is familiar to the point of being commonplace, yet it bears so directly upon our thought that we cannot afford to pass it by, or to overlook its connection with our present Beatitude. Spiritual hunger and thirst are incentives to the

assimilation of the nutriment of the spiritual life in the external spiritual order. The shame that attaches to wrong-doing, sorrow and remorse for sin, are signs of moral health, while hunger and thirst for goodness are still more hopeful and more blessed signs. Where they are absent or quiescent, the light that is in us is darkness, and how great is that darkness! Yet they exist potentially in all men. To awaken them, or to stir them into increased activity, was the mission of the Son of Man, who defined even their unsatisfied presence as a state of blessedness.

THE DIVINE PROVISION.

We are now led to inquire the sense in which God may be said to have made provision for the satisfaction of man's hunger for goodness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after right-eousness," declared the Master. Why? Because "they shall be filled." The existence of the yearning is prophetic of its

ultimate complete fulfillment, but when, and where, and how? However far short of its actual realization the Christian in his experience may fall, there can be but one answer to the question of the when and where, and that is here and now, that is, in this present life. But when the third question, How? is raised, the voices of our accredited teachers are singularly at variance. No impartial student of the Gospel narratives questions that Christ attained a standard of righteousness to which no less a term than absolute can be applied. In what true sense can that righteousness be said to be related to us, and we to it? The most precious philossophy of Christian experience turns upon that question. "This is the name whereby he shall be called," so read the ancient prophecy, "The Lord our righteousness." In what valid sense is this true of Christ in his relation to us? Certainly not in that unreal and fictitious sense in which we have been taught that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, a theory for which

the interpreters of St. Paul were largely responsible. For if the Incarnation be understood as the historic fulfillment of the ideal and fact of righteousness in human experience, then righteousness ceases to be an abstraction, and in some deep sense we may conceive it as related to the needs of man's inner life, to the hunger and thirst of man's spiritual nature. may even go a step further, and speak of Christ's imparted righteousness, which description brings it very near to the terms in which Christ himself expressed it. "Jesus said unto them: I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst. I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever." The Jews of his day esteemed this a hard saying, and many of them on account of it severed their relations with him. It is likewise incomprehensible to us, yet it is the central truth of the Christian religion. To receive Christ into our spirits, to assim-

ilate his righteousness by the reception of the living principle that animated it, to grow up into his spiritual likeness, is at once the inspiration and the privilege of the Christian life.

THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE.

This brings us to our closing thought, the application of the principle to human condition. The spiritual environment to which our craving for righteousness points being Christ, the Living Bread, or Living Water, for the terms are used interchangeably, what means are to be used for the awakening of the sense of spiritual hunger or spiritual thirst, without which the spiritual life declines? The analogy of the physical life is suggestive, and may furnish a hint or two that may be neither unreal nor fanciful. Atmosphere is necessary to physical health, exercise to physical growth, and these conduce to the encouragement of an appetite and relish for food, without

which health is impossible. It is said of an invalid who came to our valley that she wrote to her friends in her eastern home that no lovelier spot on earth could be found, that friends were kind and the surroundings ideal, and that she knew she would soon get well if only she could have an appetite. Spiritual invalidism amid most favorable surroundings is a familiar and pathetic spectacle. To awaken or encourage a relish for spiritual things is fundamental to spiritual health. The pure atmosphere of holy living, the recreative exercises of Christian service, all conduce towards that end, but the symptom of improvement is the appetite. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. There is that in the spiritual environment which makes for the soul's nutrition and growth. The Living Bread that came down from Heaven is offered freely to all, the living fountain ever pours forth its life-giving streams, for Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever, still cries out to the

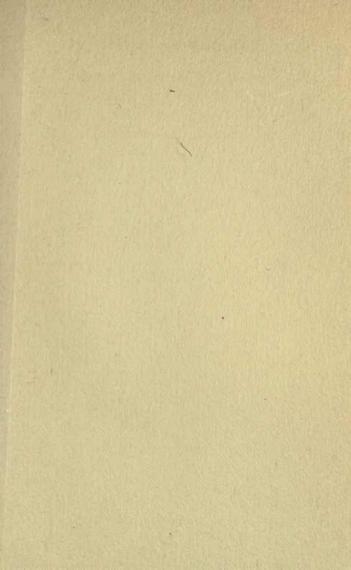
craving souls of men: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

THE SACRAMENTAL BREAD.

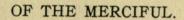
No discussion of the Beatitude of the Quest for Righteousness would be complete without some reference to the great symbolic act with which the Redeemer closed his ministry, when, "on the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread and brake it, saying 'This is My Body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of Me.'" It is the custom of Anglican writers to dwell with satisfaction upon the philosophy of the real spiritual Presence in the sacramental feast, as infinitely superior both to the empty memorialism of the theory of the Protestant bodies and to the crude materialism of the teaching of the Church of Rome. The doctrine of the real spiritual Presence is without doubt close to the teaching of Jesus, but the narrowness

with which it is held has a distinct tendency to undo its lofty meaning, and even to falsify it. Christ is present in the sacrament of the altar only as he is present in the Church, which is his body. and in Christian consciousness, which is his sanctuary. We have found that early in his ministry he declared himself to be the Living Bread that came down from Heaven, and that his disciples counted this a hard saying, utterly unreasonable. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they murmured, as they withdrew from his company, and forsook his cause. A veil of silence then fell upon this glorious theme of his self-impartation as the Living Bread, till the fateful night in which he was betrayed, when he essayed to objectify the spiritual fact in sacramental symbol. Yet, even with the mystic Presence thus made figuratively visible, there were those in the Apostolic company who, like ourselves, failed to discern his Body, that is, his spiritual nearness, or who, discerning it, failed to

perceive that the pledge of its reality was its correlation with the wider truth of his indwelling in his Church, and in Christian life and consciousness.







"Blessed are the Merciful: for they shall obtain Mercy."

V.

OF THE MERCIFUL.

THE Beatitude of the Merciful marks the transition from the passive aspect of the earlier Beatitudes to the active dispositions of the later ones, the Beatitude of the Quest for Righteousness standing midway in the process. If, as we found at the beginning of our study, the Kingdom of Heaven is the theme of the music of the Beatitudes, as is revealed both in the opening chord and in the closing strain of the music, Righteousness is the key into which this theme is transposed, the remaining Beatitudes being interpretative of the meaning of that righteousness.

THE RELATIVITY OF MERCY.

Our first thought in connection with the Beatitude of the Merciful concerns its

special place in the octave. Mercy here follows, explains, and illumines righteousness. A careful study of the quality of mercy or mercifulness shows it to be relative in its nature, for nowhere in the sacred records will it be found to stand quite alone, righteousness, or justice, or truth, ever supporting it upon one side or the other. In ancient Hebrew literature, the literature of the quest for righteousness, this relativity of mercy is the theme of prophet and poet alike. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good," declares Micah, "for what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The psalmist sets forth the intimacy of this relationship. "Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It is evident that, to the psalmist, truth flourishing out of the earth, and righteousness looking down from heaven, are not strangers to mercy, but eternal forms through which mercy is made manifest. And

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what is dimly shadowed in the Old Testament is clearly revealed in the New, for mercy, hand in hand with righteousness and truth, sings its way through the Gospel story. To isolate the quality of mercy as it greets us at nearly every turn in holy scripture, is to falsify and dishonor it. The description of the process of the last judgment, so graphically given by St. Matthew, is a magnificent setting forth of mercy as the ultimate reward of mercifulness. "Come. ye blessed of my Father: inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ye did it unto me." Yet it is possible to isolate such a passage as this in support of a philanthropy entirely devoid of the moral elements which form the very fibre of mercifulness. In like manner it is possible to isolate the Beatitude of the Merciful from its companions in the octave; to forget that it is preceded by the quest for righteousness, and followed by pureheartedness. The relation between them is, in fact, reciprocal. Mercy, as we have

intimated, softens and humanizes righteousness, while righteousness in turn strengthens and ennobles mercy.

ITS QUALITY AND SOURCE.

Our understanding of the Beatitude will be assisted by an inquiry into the source of mercy; a study of its place in the character and teachings of Christ, who himself embodies the spirit of the Beatitude; a consideration of the sense in which the merciful may expect to obtain mercy.

The most casual reflection makes it apparent that mercy does not spring from nature, or inhere in nature's processes. The accepted teaching of evolution, as regards its general principle, depicts nature as in a state of unceasing and relentless struggle, ever forcing out of the race for existence those individual types and collective species that are incapable of meeting the terms of success in the combat. In the light of the "final goal" of which the poet writes, it may be true

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that "nothing walks with aimless feet," that "not one life shall be destroyed, or cast as rubbish to the void," but this is an idealistic view of the case. The scientific view of nature is quite otherwise. In John Fiske's delightful little "Through Nature to God," the writer contrasts the poetic and scientific aspects of nature under the title, "The summer field and what it tells us." He draws a picture of the daisied field, musical with the murmurs of insect life, where creeping and winged things revel in the pure joy of existence; where the sights and sounds of nature in her varying moods, -the gladness of the bobolink, the thrush's tender note, telling of the sweet companionship of the nest,—fill us with a sense of unalloyed happiness and abounding life. All of which, he promptly reminds us, is absolutely misleading and delusive. For, as he goes on to show, just so soon as we come a little closer to the facts, we find them telling an entirely different story. The life of the countless tiny denizens of the

daisied field is one of unceasing toil, of crowding and jostling, where the weaker fall unpitied by the way; of starvation from hunger and cold; of robbery utterly shameless, and murder utterly cruel. When we think of the hawk's talons buried in the breast of the wren, while the relentless beak tears the little wings from the quivering bleeding body, our mood toward nature is changed. Not only does nature appear a stranger to pity, but utterly and aggressively merciless.

THE INSTINCT OF PITY.

Moreover, what is true of nature, in the lower orders of being, is correspondingly true of man in his varied activities and relationships. Man, in his ascent from nature, brings with him the heritage of his savage ancestry. In his purely natural state he is merciless and pitiless, and even when subjected to the refining influences of civilized life, retains instincts of relentless cruelty, and habits of warfare. Man's inhumanity to man has passed into a

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proverb because it is proverbial. The fierce competitions of business, in which the weaker go to the wall, the heartless selfishness of social life, the bitter antagonisms of race, remind us that human nature left to itself is devoid of what is falsely termed the "instinct of pity," pity being instinctive only when a higher law has intervened and lifted man's nature into the spiritual region.

Where, then, may we find the source of mercy and pity, if not in nature? "Every good gift and every perfect gift," says the Apostle, "is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that can be cast by turning." And mercy is indeed a good and perfect gift. Here the teaching of an apostle and the insight of the greatest of modern poets meet. When Shakespeare prompts Portia to exalt the quality of mercy, it is on the ground that it "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath;" that it is indeed "an attribute of God him-

self." Nowhere is the poet's insight into spiritual things more divinely true. The course of mercy is defended upon the plea of its being Godlike, which is equivalent to the motive urged by Christ, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven."

MERCY IN CHRIST'S TEACHING.

This view of mercy being true, we are not surprised to find the quality that lies at the heart of our Beatitude the subject above all others which Christ enlarges upon most frequently in his later teachings. It is the incentive to forgiveness, which is but an expression of the "pitifulness of the Infinite Mercy;" and, when the law of retaliation is succeeded by the law of love, the disciples are enjoined to render the deeds of mercy. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless

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them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." Upon the completeness with which man exhibits mercy towards his fellow-man in the forgiveness of wrongs inflicted, turns the question of his own forgiveness at the hands of his Father in Heaven. This lies at the heart of the Lord's Prayer, and is developed further in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, where the punishment inflicted leads to the admonition "So also will my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your heart forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." And what is true of Christ's teaching is true of his life, which is interfused with the quality of mercifulness, the beauty of his human character resting not alone upon those lofty traits which are the bond of its moral perfectness, but upon the union of these with mercy and pity and tenderness. His mission to seek and to save the lost had its

spring in love, and found expression in a service which abounded in acts of mercy. We read of him that he "knew what was in man." His gentleness in dealing with human frailty, his unfailing compassion, had its impulse in a longing to bring men to a knowledge of their spiritual possibilities; and the desire thus to win them to truth and righteousness had its motive in love, and its expression in mercy. The old theologies, which depicted the Infinite Being as setting forth upon the quest of man's redemption for His own greater glory, with man utterly lost and depraved as the object of the divine mission, issued from an entirely false premise. That such a view is passing, is cause for devout thankfulness. God would never have sought to save man were man not worth the saving. God, seeing in man His own image, makes mercy the measure of his love, and in a deep and precious sense mercy becomes the meeting-point of God and man. The blessedness of the Infinite One translates itself into the spirit of

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man, who may be merciful as his Father in Heaven is merciful.

THE REWARD OF THE MERCIFUL.

We have dwelt at some length upon the central word of our Beatitude in order to avoid a conclusion that would narrow its meaning. The mercy promised as a reward of mercifulness contemplates not only the merciful word and act, but the merciful disposition. The Beatitudes all have their primary meanings in states of being, rather than in acts of doing. The blessedness promised does not await opportunities for the exercise of the disposition, but inheres in the disposition itself. We conclude, then, that when Jesus pronounces his Beatitude upon the merciful man, it is his thought that to be merciful is to be Godlike, which is shown in his conclusion, "Bless them that hate you, in order that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." Man's purpose in showing mercy to his fellow-creatures is precisely the same as

that which inspired God's compassion toward humankind. The merciful man shows pity and tenderness again and again, in the face of cold ingratitude and bitter hate, to the gracious end that he too may become a saviour of his race, bringing men to a knowledge of their Father, and to a realization of the infinite possibilities that lie enfolded within their natures.

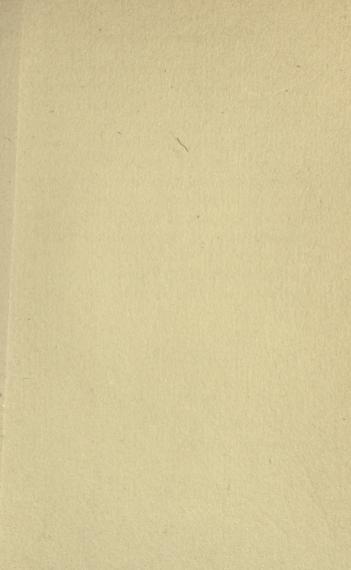
And who can measure the secret happiness that crowns the lot of those who render the deeds of mercy! "You will find as you look back upon your life," wrote one who was ever active in the ministries of love, "that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love. As memory scans the past, above and beyond all the transitory pleasures of life, there leap forward those supreme hours when you have been enabled to do unnoticed kindnesses to those around you, things too trifling to speak about, but which you feel have entered into your

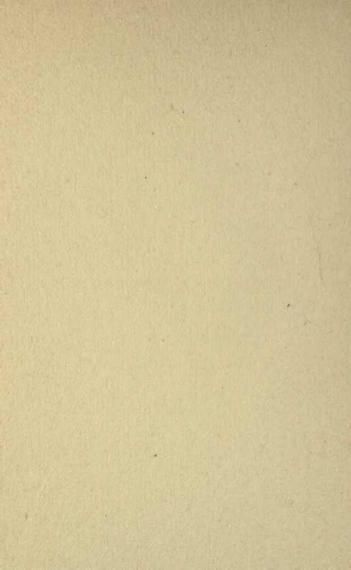
Of the Merciful.

eternal life. I have seen almost all the beautiful things God has made; I have enjoyed almost every pleasure that He has planned for man; and yet, as I look back, I see, standing out above all the life that has gone, four or five short experiences when the love of God reflected itself in some poor imitation, some small act of love of mine, and these seem to be the things which alone of all one's life abide."

He continues: "the words which all of us one day shall hear, sound not of theology, but of life; not of churches and saints, but of the hungry and poor; not of creeds and doctrines, but of shelter and clothing; not of Bibles and prayer books, but of cups of cold water in the name of Christ." The merciful shall obtain mercy when humanity, redeemed and restored through the ministries of love, shall stand in the presence of God, the perfect embodiment of his glory, the absolute reflection of his love. Through fellowship with him we are made partakers of the divine nature; and the cup

of cold water in the name of a disciple, or the life laid down for the sake of a friend, shall not be destitute of reward. But there is a sense in which we may look for that reward in this present life, not only in a consciousness of being godlike, but in the fact that love begets love, and though foiled again and again in its gracious ministry of pity and tenderness, the moment comes at last when its conquest is complete, and the object of its compassion is melted into a grateful acknowledgement of that which love hath wrought.





OF THE PURE IN HEART.

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart: for they shall see God."

VI.

OF THE PURE IN HEART.

I will be remembered that in a previous address we considered the relation of the octave to originality, recalling the familiar parallels that may be found in the sacred writings that nurtured the mental development of Jesus. We found that, when the full significance of these parallels has been admitted, the fact remains that "the Master formulated the Beatitudes, grouped them into their remarkable sequence, and crowned them with that spiritual distinctiveness which gives them their essential character." When, however, we turn our thoughts to the Beatitude of the Pure in Heart, which in its clear depths reflects the character of Jesus more perfectly, and enshrines his vision of spiritual truth more completely,

than do any of its companions in the octave, we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere, for no parallel or equivalent to this Beatitude can be found elsewhere in Holy Scripture. It wells up from the inner spiritual consciousness of the Master, and is as original in the history of spiritual thought as his own stainless character was unparalleled in the unfoldings of human experience.

It is impossible to escape a sense of the singular elevation of this Beatitude of the Pure in Heart. Following the footsteps of the Master in the path of the perfect life, we have ascended step by step from the quiet valley of contemplation to heights of serenest vision, where, to the spiritual eye, "the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off" may be seen. "Lord who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." "When Thou saidst unto me 'Seek ye my face,' my heart said unto thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek." It is

because of a sense of soil and impurity upon hands and heart that the face of God becomes veiled to the seeker, and the soul of man sets forth upon the quest not only of righteousness, but of purity and holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

THE INWARD SPRING OF PURITY.

The first thought suggested by the Beatitude is that it is a development of the central idea of righteousness, upon its spiritual or subjective side. After pronouncing his blessing upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the Master has a word to say about mercifulness, which is righteousness active, and then passes on to speak of purity, which is righteousness passive. We have already found that the Beatitudes have their primary meaning in states of being rather than in acts of doing. This is preeminently true of pureheartedness, which is a condition of inward purity, from

which pure thoughts and dispositions unceasingly spring. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Thus ran the ancient proverb, and it is true for all time. It is just here that religion is distinguished from moral philosophy. It inquires into the state of the heart. It claims and enlists the affections. It begins its work at the center, where it insists that purity shall be enthroned, and passes out to the widest circumference of life. And that which is true in the direction of purity is equally true as regards the sources of impurity. Out of the heart proceed as from a poisoned spring every one of those sinister influences that darken human life and destroy human happiness. But, when purity is enthroned in the heart, it becomes the inspiration of every good and perfect work, the safeguard of the moral life, and the inward pledge of character.

THE SPECTRUM OF PURITY.

An analysis of the content of heartpurity will disclose certain distinctive constituent elements, among which we find guilelessness, singleness of heart, and simplicity. All of these are present in the condition of heart which this Beatitude describes, and with them in mind we shall be able to examine more closely the quality of pureheartedness as it is reflected in human life. First, then, we see its presence in the unsullied innocence of childhood. It is very common to hear the quality of innocence disparaged on the ground that it is mere ignorance of evil, and, therefore, without moral significance. Because it is untried it is divested of its moral beauty, and emptied of its moral value. There is an element of truth in this view, for the problem of the Christian life consists in the development of conscious purity, under the pressure of temptation, out of the raw material of innocence. Yet at the same time it must

be constantly borne in mind that Christ declared this condition of innocence, or some state analagous to it, the title of entrance into the Kingdom of God. "They brought young children to Christ," says St. Mark, "that he should touch them, but the disciples rebuked those that brought them," a circumstance which drew from the lips of Christ those tender words, "suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In other words, guilelessness, singleness of heart, and simplicity, are of the texture of spiritual character. In the light of Christ's clear teaching, with what mingled feelings of surprise and regret must we regard that curious phase of protestant evangelism which busies itself with emotional expedients for the so-called conversion of children, forcing upon their pure minds thoughts of guilt and sin, which belong

only to later developments of spiritual experience! Christ did not say "except ye convert these little ones and acquaint them with sin and its consequences, they cannot come to know the Father's love," but enjoined upon the disciples themselves that they should become as little children. And in another place, in singular appositeness to this Beatitude, the Master said, speaking of little children, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven." It was in the spirit of this utterance of Jesus that Wordsworth wrote his immortal line, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

THE RESTORATION OF PURITY.

If, then, heart-purity is a condition analogous to innocence, and such a state must be attained if the soul is to win the vision of God, is not the outlook one of discouragement to us who bear the marks of many an unsuccessful struggle, the stains of many a dark defeat, in the con-

flict with the forces of moral evil that are in the world? It is here that the gospel of Christ finds us. The soul must return to purity, not innocence. This purity is imparted by the divine spirit who "takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us," that is, mediates or imparts the purity of Christ. And this principle of transformation, working from within, is met by a like principle, working from without. "Reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord we are changed from character to character." In the New Testament sometimes this inward alteration is described in terms of regeneration, sometimes of redemption. "How can a man be born, when he is old?" asked Nicodemus, naively. "Art thou a Master of Israel and knowest not these things?" answered Jesus. Yet Christ's explanation of the process of regeneration does not explain, it only emphasizes the mysteriousness, of the new birth. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell

whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of the spirit." Entrance into the spiritual kingdom can be effected only by a birth from above, closely associated with which the constituent elements of inner purity reappear, namely, the guilelessness that thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but in the truth; the singleness of heart, which says, "I come to do thy will, O God"; and that simplicity of character which is the vesture of pureheartedness.

Restoration of purity through a redemptive process is another aspect of the work of Christ in man's spiritual nature. We cannot fathom the meaning of the Cross, but we know that in some deep sense it is closely related to this process.

"We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains he had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there."

In whatever obscurity the mystery of atonement may be involved, it becomes

luminous with meaning when it is found that it meets and answers the mystery of evil in the human heart, which otherwise leaves the soul of man groping hopelessly in darkness and the shadow of death. The Bible opens with a symbolic account of the fall of man from a state of innocence. It closes with a symbolic representation of the restoration to purity of the host of God's redeemed, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white, and with palms in their hands. "These are they which have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

THE BEATIFIC VISION.

We pass now to a consideration of the spiritual vision which is promised to the pure in heart. "They shall see God," declares the Master. Is this the statement of a clear and essential truth, or is it anextravagance of the mysticism of Jesus? The meaning back of the assurance is, of course, quite obvious, *i.e.*, that our pow-

ers of perception are influenced by our moral condition. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" There can be but one answer to the question, and that follows immediately in the text: "Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." As an English writer has said, "the hill of the Lord, on whose summit all light shines, is no inaccessible height. Moral elevation and spiritual vision are intimately related." It is of interest to trace this thought of the spiritual vision as it appears elsewhere in scripture, pre-eminently in the writings of St. John, who declares, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him," then adding significantly, "for we shall see him as he is." He evidently refers to the vision of the glorified Christ, for in his Gospel he writes with careful emphasis: "No man hath seen God at any time, the Only Begotten, which is in the bosom of the

Father, he hath declared him." It is very evident that to the Apostle's mind the truest, the completest, the divinest revelation of God was in the person and character of the Christ. The sight or vision of God is ever through some medium. The vision is seen through a veil. To the purehearted there is a view of God in nature and her processes, for "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork," while to the unspiritual, the impure, the selfabsorbed, God in nature is simply invisible. "The sights and sounds of the material world are but the drapery of the robe beneath which God has concealed his mysterious loveliness." As we look at nature we see God as through a veil, but the essential condition of our seeing him at all is the grace of an inward purity enthroned in the heart.

THE VISION IN HUMANITY.

A higher revelation is found in that disclosure of himself which God has given

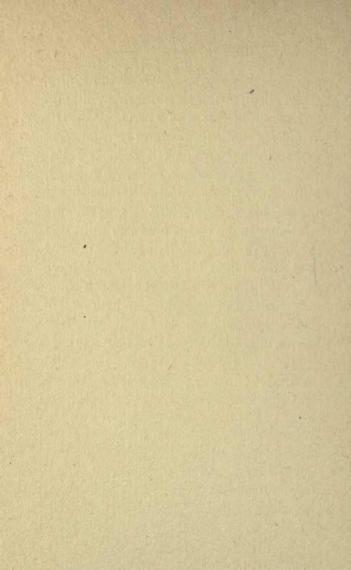
in man, upon whom he has bestowed his image, whom he has fashioned in some deep sense in his invisible likeness. In following the quest for God as he thus unfolds himself in human life and experience, we must avoid a predisposition in favor of accepted types. "The light that lighteth every man" is diffusing itself in ways that cannot be measured by standards of orthodoxy. The question as to who are the saints and who the sinners may be settled some time in some future adjudication, but not here, and not now. The image of God, marred and imperfect through human frailty, is stamped upon all men, irrespective of the accidents of temporal condition. And the pureminded, passing in and out among men, as did the Son of Man in the days of his earthly ministry, will see God in all his human children, and under the spell of that vision will go forth upon ministries of service and helpfulness. When the temptation to misanthropy is strong upon him, and nameless disap-

pointments fall like darkening shadows across the path of his well-doing, he will still be obedient to the heavenly vision, remembering that his Master, who saw more deeply into the human heart than he can ever see, retained his belief in man, and out of almost hopeless conditions won response from souls in whom the divine spark seemed almost extinct, calling forth in human lives the image of his divine Father.

THE VISION IN CHRIST.

But the vision of God in nature,—
"though the earth and every common sight be apparelled in celestial light;" and the vision of God in history, though history be understood as indeed "His story," must ever be partial and incomplete, because of the dimness of the medium of the disclosure. The perfect vision of God is in the face of Jesus Christ who is the "effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance." "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," was the

yearning entreaty of the wondering Philip. "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" was his Master's questioning reproof. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As these words fell from his lips, Philip must have recalled those other words of his, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see: for I say unto you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them." The beatific vision,—the heaven of the pure in heart—will be a contemplation of the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.



OF THE PEACEMAKERS.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers: for they shall be called Sons of God."

VII

OF THE PEACEMAKERS.

I N the Beatitude of the Peacemakers, with its crowning word concerning sonship, we touch the seventh note in the octave of blessedness. The delineation of spiritual character at this stage reaches its loftiest expression, the next step being the crystallization of that character by contact with its opposite in the world, involving persecution. Glancing backward over our previous studies, it will be seen that in the development of his theme, the Master passes two distinct points of transition, the first of these being the transition from the passive to the active in the interior region of the spiritual life, where poverty of spirit, contrition, and what is imperfectly termed meekness, rise into the eager quest of the

soul for righteousness; the second being the transition from the inner life of aspiration and effort to the wider field of endeavor and service, as set forth in the character of the Peacemaker. In unfolding the meaning of our present Beatitude, let us think first of the preparation of the peacemaker for his task, next of the sphere of his influence, and finally of the reward of his service.

HIS PREPARATION.

While all of the qualities previously enumerated in the octave are constituents of the peacemaker's preparation, the Beatitude immediately preceding the present one expresses the essential prerequisite for peacemaking according to the rule of Christ. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." The mystic reward of the pure in heart being the beatific vision, or vision of God, where may we find that vision most perfectly expressed? Obviously, in Christ. "No one," writes St. John, "hath seen

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God at any time; the only-begotten, which is on the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In what character. then, does the Incarnation disclose the Divine Father? God's disclosure of himself in Christ is that of the Divine Peacemaker, reconciling the world unto himself, sending his Son to preach peace to them that are far off, and to them that are nigh, accomplishing his gracious purpose at the cost of infinite pain, and completing his benign work by the appointment of a ministry of reconciliation. Prophecy anticipates this disclosure. The Son to be born, the child to be given, is to be called the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. In the celestial setting of the nativity, the antiphon of the heavenly host is an announcement of universal peace, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."" And anticipation is justified by fulfill-

ment. As the matchless life unfolds in the gospel story, of profounder significance than any mere program of peace and peacemaking, deeper than any announcement of goodwill to a weary, restless world, was the serene, unbroken calm in which the Son of Man lived and had his being. It told of the perfect adjustment of a valid human experience to the Divine Nature of which it was an essential part. So personal was the realization of this peace to his consciousness that he came to speak of it as his own peace, a peace which having received he was thenceforth able to communicate. The closing scene in his life-drama, when his human form vanishes from sight, lost in the encircling cloud, depicts him in the act of the bestowal of his peace.

PEACE AND LOVE.

The primary preparation of the Peacemaker is the reception of that peace, the possession of which signifies admission to the ministry of reconciliation. Yet it

Of the Peacemakers.

should be remembered that the peace which qualifies for peacemaking is derivative in its nature. It is the offspring and flower of love. The motive that lay back of the Incarnation, God's overture of peace, was love. The Infinite One so loved the world that he gave his bestbeloved. Beyond this, the mind cannot denetrate, for this love was uncreated, elemental. This motive reappears in the mission of the Christ, and again in the peacemaking of those who profess and call themselves his disciples. Under its holy impulse, and by its informing grace, the peace of God, ruling the peacemaker's heart through love, becomes the disciple's noblest spiritual asset, as well as his equipment for his task.

On the other hand, if love provides the motive and creates the impulse, it is a grace equally efficient in defining the manner in which every work of reconciliation must be done. Think of the golden fruitage of this rare growth from the garden of the soul! The fruit of the spirit

of love is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control. The peacemaker, rooted and grounded in love, will express these in every activity and relation. The principle upon which he works will be the identical principle which inspired the Incarnation, and animated the Christ. Thus equipped, he will be qualified for unfailing service in the broad field of effective peacemaking.

THE SPHERE OF HIS INFLUENCE.

The sphere of the peacemaker's influence and activity, which at first glance appears quite obvious, is not unfrequently narrowed by misconceptions. We picture the traditional peacemaker an amiable individual, adjusting surface differences, deprecating impending quarrels, ever in the act of pouring oil upon the troubled waters of incompatibility in its varied aspects, by gentle speech and soft appeal. In such a nature, many of the elements of which we have previously spoken are

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surely mixed, but the picture falls short of that which is framed for us in the Beatitude of the Peacemakers, far short of the portrait of the Great Peacemaker as painted in the gospel narratives. The reason for the colorlessness of the traditional conception appears the moment our eyes rest upon the wider horizons contemplated by the Master in appointing to his followers the ministry of reconciliation. If the disciple was not to be above his Master respecting spiritual privilege, neither was he to be below his Master in the furtherance of the peace mission of the Son of God, this latter term, Son of God, being applied freely and without reserve to the obscurest of his followers, who, led by his example and inspired by his vision, should seek to usher in the Kingdom of his peace. The boundaries of this Kingdom, which we must now define, determine for us the precise region wherein the peacemaker of the Beatitude must fulfill his appointed task. These boundaries, which compre-

hend the entire field of man's broken peace, extend from their common center in man's inner spiritual consciousness, in a two-fold direction or relationship, that is, towards his fellow-man, and towards his Father-God. Peace, in its last analysis, is a matter of adjustment, and the process of this adjustment is ever fraught with pain and disquietude. Thus the Great Peacemaker is heard to declare that he came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword; to develop antagonisms, to foster variance, to engender strife. In the sphere of man's relation to the problem of his own self-realization, the classic statement of the case of man's struggle for peace is found in the self-revelation of a later Apostle, who vividly portrays the conflict which he discovers in his nature between what he terms the law of his mind and the action of those baser impulses which are leagued against him, condemning him to an ignoble captivity, the eternal enemies of his peace. He rises upon stepping-stones of his dead or dying

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self to the higher things of the spirit, by association with a power, which he finds to be resident in the living Christ, who becomes the instrument of his peace.

THE INWARD HARMONY.

This reflection upon the peace of the soul in the perfect adjustment of the motions of the inner life to a higher law, at first sight appears to have little bearing upon the mission of the peacemaker, so accustomed are we to conceive the latter in the role of an intermediary, pure and simple. Yet it is the realization of this inward harmony which qualifies for peacemaking, for it opens to the peacemaker's vision the wide field of man's deepest spiritual need, the need for inward unity, while at the same time, it provides him with a gospel of peace expressed in terms of experience. And what a gospel is here! The Beatitude of the Peacemaker is the blessedness of the soul which whispers to another soul the message of the power of Christ to create har-

mony in a region where all has been jarring discord and the tumultuous restlessness of despair. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring such tidings! To be at peace within one's self is to be at peace with God, and to be at peace with God is to be at peace with the world. If it be objected that such a view is individualistic, and formulates no program of peace, no consummation such as the ancient seer had in vision, when he dreamed of a far-off time when war should be no more, and over broken sword and shattered spear should rise the symbols of a renewed social and industrial order, the answer is that while Christianity claims this vision as her very own, and is committed to its advancement by every means known to her organized consciousness, her program of peace must avail but little apart from the reality of a conscious personal experience, based upon an underlying spiritual principle, interpreting the essential elements of the gospel of peacemaking. The Kingdom

Of the Peacemakers.

of peace is both within and without, but it is first of all within, and cometh not with observation. Christ himself ushered in no universal order, only the beginnings of a reign of peace in the hearts of such as would acknowledge his sway. The sphere of the peacemaker's activity is limitless. No task too humble, no situation too lowly, to enlist his noblest powers of mind and heart. On the other hand, no problem of human condition or circumstance so great as to be beyond the range of his solicitude and concern.

THE REWARD OF HIS SERVICE.

We are now led to consider briefly the reward of the peacemaker's service. In the previous Beatitudes, the blessedness affixed told of spiritual possession, as of the heritage of the earth, or of admission to spiritual privilege, as of the vision of God. In the present instance, both privilege and possession are implied, while a further element is introduced, namely the world's acknowledgement of

spiritual nobility. The peacemakers are to be called Sons of God, that is, outwardly accredited as such. Viewed in the light of his life-story, as we have it in the gospel narratives, there is something bordering upon the pathetic in this assurance as it falls from the lips of the Master. The evangelists, working over their reminiscences nearly half a century later, present the picture of the Christ in a framework of the supernatural. They report the tradition of an annunciation made to the virgin of Nazareth concerning the Christ-child, that he should be called the Son of God. They recall, as they picture the baptismal and transfiguration scenes, a voice from the skies attesting the verity of that Sonship. But a hope and yearning that lay deep in the heart of Jesus was that his contemporaries should perceive his Sonship, and that acknowledgement should come from a human, rather than from an angelic or divine, source. When, in a supreme hour, such an acknowledgement came, it marked

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the highest level of his self-revelation to the world, the summit of a human joy, which even the approaching mystery of the passion and the cross could not dim or overcast. We have already traced an identity between the Great Peacemaker's task and that appointed his followers in the ministry of reconciliation. We now find an identity in the reward for the service rendered. The blessedness of the Peacemaker, according to this Beatitude, consists not merely in a consciousness of sonship, but in the recognition of that sonship by the world. Yet the secret joy of the peacemaker has its spring in that which makes such recognition possible on the part of the world, namely, the world's power to discern and appraise those nobler traits and finer excellences which, in the peacemaker's character, speak of a sonship beatific and divine.



OF THE PERSECUTED.

"Blessed are they that have been Persecuted for Righteousness," sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

VIII.

OF THE PERSECUTED.

HE life of the spirit in relation to its environment, anticipated, as we have seen, in the character and work of the Peacemaker, may be said to be the theme of the eighth and concluding Beatitude, "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Apart from its own clear message, which we shall presently consider, the position assigned this Beatitude of the Persecuted in the octave of blessedness is in itself instructive. The portrayal of the inner life in its previous stages has been invested with an atmosphere of mysticism. "Tempers and dispositions of the soul" have been appraised, and their spiritual equivalents given. To the coldly matter-

of-fact and unspiritual, this expression, "an atmosphere of mysticism," is very nearly synonymous with "an air of unreality." It suggests a region veiled from sight and sense, unrelated to the actualities of the world's life. Keenly conscious of this, and with a just valuation of the ministry of environment in the final development of the life of the spirit, the Master closes his eight-fold pronouncement of blessedness by objectifying the Christian character in an apotheosis of martyrdom: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." The character formed in secret now emerges into the light, becomes a factor to be reckoned with by the world, whose hostility it provokes, and finds its reward in the discovery that it is no shadowy and unsubstantial thing, but the enduring workmanship of God.

ITS PLACE IN THE OCTAVE.

The impression that we have in this final Beatitude an element which impairs the spiritual sequence and violates the structural unity of the octave, results from a failure to perceive the intention of this last touch of the Master in his scheme of blessedness, namely, to objectify and visualize the spiritual life and character, and thus to cause the environment into which it is projected to minister to its completeness. It would be difficult to conceive an ending more thoroughly in keeping with the body of Christ's teaching, both in the Sermon on the Mount, to which the Beatitudes form a sort of prologue, and in the gospel narratives generally. Moreover, this teaching is a transcript from his own experience in the field of the spiritual life. The patient years of his preparation, "all touched by awe and serious thought," are reflected in the earlier Beatitudes, while his active ministry, with its deeds of mercy, and

persecution encountered in the path of peacemaking, are imaged in the later ones.

With these thoughts in mind we are prepared to examine more closely the particular beatitude before us. Persecution considered with respect to its significance as a factor in spiritual development, its essentially ethical quality, and its purely spiritual reward, suggests a division of the subject that will assist us to develop its meaning and apply its teaching.

ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

The significance of persecution, that is, of the unfriendly, inhospitable attitude of the world towards those traits of life and character that judge and condemn it, cannot be overlooked as a factor in spiritual development. The Founder of Christianity clearly foresaw that the introduction of a new and higher type of spiritual manhood would inevitably offend and antagonize, where it failed to assimilate or alter, and as an incentive to

courage and steadfastness on the part of his followers, showed that such antagonisms would not only serve the interests of that higher life which it sought to destroy, but would seal its blessedness. This he had tested in his own experience, and the disciples were to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism.

Efforts are sometimes made to reconstruct the earliest period of Christian history with a view to the discovery of the true nature of the dynamic which in the first centuries endued Christianity with a peculiar and unique potency. The problem, as we know, is many-sided, and there are countless avenues of approach, yet it is possible that its very simplicity confuses us. Viewed from its positive side, the dynamic of Christianity is the living Christ, known to us as a fact of conscious experience, vitally related to all that we think or do, the vision of all that we may hope to be. This was the faith once delivered to the saints. But the earliest saints did not rest in contempla-

tion of the greatness of this disclosure. nor were they satisfied to hand it down to future ages in sacrament, in creed, in word of testimony, as a trust inviolate. They were not theologians; they were martyrs, confessors. As Christ had been. so were they in the world, witnesses to an unseen spiritual order; with this clear difference, that while to him this order had been the reign of an invisible Divine Father, whom no man had seen at any time, nor indeed could see, to them it was the presence of their living Lord, whose bodily withdrawal had been the signal of a glorious return with renewed power to help, to sustain, and to bless. Therefore, when the world reproached them, and persecuted them, and uttered all manner of evil against them falsely, they believed it was for his sake, and they rejoiced, and were exceeding glad. Is there not room for self-criticism as we recall the suffering triumphs of these early Christians? With what keen irony did Christ say to the Pharisees, "the world cannot

hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that its deeds are evil?"

THE PERMANENT ELEMENT.

Assuming that the beatitude before us contains a permanent element, what inference must be drawn from the reflection that Christian experience affords no equivalent to this persecution for righteousness' sake, no distant semblance of martyrdom, no faint shadow of reproach for the name of Christ? Either that the spirit of Christ has finally conquered, and the Kingdom of Righteousness, over which he shall reign forever, is at the point of realization, or else that the vigor of Christian character has become enfeebled, its authority impaired, its power to make the cause of righteousness a living issue in the affairs of life, discredited or denied. When the Christian life is lived upon its higher levels, and Christ's absolute standards become intimately related to each problem of experience, because his living Presence is the central fact of

that experience, then Christian character reverts to the simplicity of its earliest and purest type; the world takes knowledge of Christian men and women that they have been with Christ, and some attitude, other than that of mere indifference, invariably results. Sometimes a mysterious spiritual awakening ensues; oftener a disposition of hostility is developed. The fact remains that whenever the Christian life, or Christ-life, is lived in earnest, the permanent element in the Beatitude of the Persecuted is discovered.

ENRICHMENT OF EXPERIENCE.

The significance of persecution as a factor in spiritual development may be seen both in its power to make Christian experience joyously conscious of itself, and in its mission to heighten and enrich the quality of that experience. Thus St. Peter writes: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you which cometh upon you, as if a strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice,

insomuch as ve are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that at the revelation of his glory ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the spirit of glory and the spirit of God resteth upon you." With what distinctness does the Apostle in this glowing passage reproduce the Beatitude of the Persecuted! The thought glows with the intensity of personal feeling, and each word throbs with meaning! "Beloved," he declares, "a fiery trial awaits you, but think it not strange, rather rejoice, and be exceeding glad." He then adds, "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye!" alleging as a reason, that "the spirit of glory and the spirit of God resteth upon you!" In the light of Christ's accomplished work, and of the Apostle's approaching martyrdom, the Beatitude of the Persecuted in this later setting is clothed with a richness of meaning, and a spiritual elevation, which its earlier form could but dimly forecast, yet all of its un-

told depth of beauty and preciousness must have been real to the Master's heart when he first uttered it, amid the peaceful scenes, and in the sweet security, of his dawning Galilean ministry. The experience of Peter is an experience common to all of the disciples whose words have come down to us. The records of their sufferings are pervaded with a serenity and a joyousness that rise ever into rapture as the ministry of pain mediates to consciousness the presence and the glory of the unseen yet living Christ.

ITS ETHICAL QUALITY.

Our examination of the significance of persecution as a factor in spiritual development leads us to consider next the Beatitude of the Persecuted in respect to the essentially ethical quality which lies at the heart of it. With a single characteristic touch Christ lifts it from the low level of persecution for its own sake, where he might conceivably have left it, to the nobler plane of persecution for

righteousness' sake, where he leaves it for all time. Had no lofty words of qualification been introduced, had blessedness been invoked upon the persecuted of mankind as such, assuredly a Beatitude had been framed in accordance with that universal instinct of pity which so often closes its eyes to moral distinctions, and fancies suffering and reproach as in themselves the mark of heaven's favor. This is the situation so justly analyzed in the earlier part of the Epistle from which we have quoted, where the Apostle declares "This is acceptable; if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully." "For what glory is it," he asks, "if when ye sin and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Without undervaluing the ministry of pain in the spirituallife, the Apostle would have us keep clearly in view the distinction between suffering for well-doing,

that is, for righteousness' sake, and suffering for wrong-doing, that is, as a result of our own folly or ignorance, the former being Christ-like, the latter devoid of spiritual significance. Suffering in itself may make for righteousness; the loneliness, the famine, and the heartache, may drive the soul back to God; but righteousness in such a case is the outcome of the reproach inflicted or the suffering borne, not the condition that provokes it. The Beatitude of the Persecuted, on the otherhand, is based upon the reproach of Christ, the offense of the Cross, the penalty inflicted by the world upon a life lived above its maxims of right, its standards of duty or of truth.

FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE.

More pertinent to our discussion of the ethical principle that lies at the heart of the Beatitude is the question, what meaning shall we attach to the clause "for righteousness" sake?" What did Christ wish to convey by the term "righteous-

ness" in the connection in which he used it? He himself anticipates the apparent difficulty here, and offers an equivalent expression which greatly simplifies the practical applications of the Beatitude. In the secondary form of the Beatitude (verse 11) he substitutes the personal term "for my sake" for the general term "for righteousness' sake," and thus interprets his thought, giving concreteness to his meaning. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," Had no such provision been made; had Christ not said in effect, "the cause of righteousness is my cause;" it is not an abstract formula of truth, or a visionary dream of righteousness, but a living spiritual Presence, that invokes your personal loyalty; is it not conceivable that we should have framed some narrower and less lofty equivalent to suit our needs? "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for conscience sake", might suggest itself as a convenient

gloss upon our Saviour's words. Thus, to the conscience of the individual, fidelity to received opinion, or subservience to the dictates of mere tradition, might wear the aspect and claim the blessedness of devotion to truth; bigotry in the face of just reproof might mistake itself for martyrdom for righteousness' sake. Doubtless fidelity to conscience in whatever cause is not without its reward. Furthermore, it is closely akin to righteousness when it is loyalty to its own inner light and leading. But the Beatitude of the Persecuted for Righteousness' sake is removed from this region of relativity by the foresight of Christ himself, who gathers all lesser loyalties into one absolute and supreme loyalty, making devotion to truth and righteousness a matter of simple and consistent devotion to himself. This it was, as we have already shown, that gave beauty and significance to the earliest Christian martyrdoms, before truth became veiled under the forms of truth, when Christians, in the confidence of a certain

faith, "endured as seeing him who is invisible."

THE REWARD OF THE PERSECUTED.

Our closing reflection upon the Beatitude is concerned with the reward of the promised blessedness, "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." This expression "the Kingdom of Heaven," as the final word in Christ's scheme of blessedness, brings us back to the point from which we started in the earliest of the Beatitudes. "The keynote touched by the Master in the opening chord is heard with added richness of meaning in the closing strain." Each of the intervening variations of blessedness stands related to this central theme, "The Kingdom of Heaven," which, as we have seen, Christ weaves into the texture of all his teaching, and makes the final goal of the spiritual life. That the expression is symbolicfigurative—is evident beyond question. What, then, is the spiritual life-thought

that lies beneath the figure, veiled in its symbolism? In its most primary aspect it is the truth of the 'Divine Indwelling; of the soul's hidden life in God, and of God's living presence in the soul.

"More present to faith's vision keen Than any other vision seen; More near, more intimately nigh Than any other earthly tie."

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

This phrase, "the Kingdom of Heaven"—despite the limitations imposed by associations of Jewish history and tradition, of which it is difficult to divest it—appeared to the mind of Christ the most available term in which to express the truth of the Divine Indwelling, together with the correlative truth of the soul's relation to this source of its life and blessedness. The "Kingdom" meant more than the enthroned presence and acknowledged authority of its Invisible King. It implied allegiance; God's royalty was to be met by the soul's loyalty, and this not by

the influence of compelling duty, but by the power of constraining love. "If any man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The significance of the Kingdom as the reward of the persecuted may be found in the fact that this inner realm of God's presence and rule, at first dimly apprehended through a sense of spiritual need and desolation (Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven) is now completely realized as a fact of conscious experience. Man becomes conscious of God, even as knowledge of whatever sort becomes real to the mind. that is, defined to consciousness, through expression. As persecution and reproach are inflicted from without, the soul's Godconsciousness is intensified within, obedience is expressed in terms of personal loyalty, and duty is glorified by love. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my

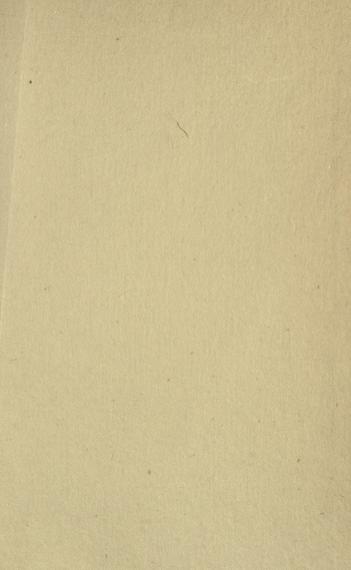
sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

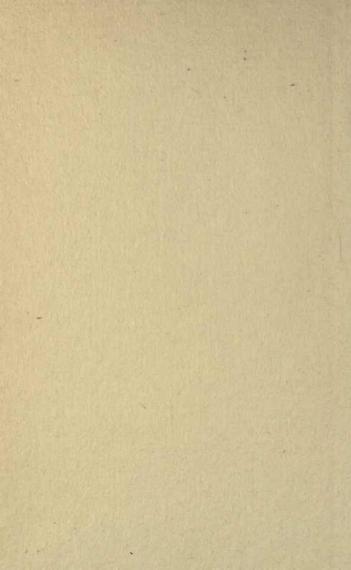














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